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'The Need for a CIA'

In answering a question from his audience the other day, Senator Eugene McCarthy said that if he were elected President, he would make an investigation of the CIA, the FBI, and the Selective Service System. His reference to the system that runs the draft was understandable, in view of all the controversy there has been over drafting or threats of drafting.

His references to the two intelligence services, the one domestic and the other foreign, was more cryptic. There has always been a certain amount of criticism of the FBI among liberals who felt that anti-Communist investigations didn't stop at Communists but cast a big shadow over all dissenters in the country. Even sharper criticism has been leveled at the Central Intelligence Agency for its clandestine activities. It has incurred opprobrium for directing the Bay of Pigs fiasco and more recently for indirectly subsidizing many organizations that had foreign activities, especially student groups. When a veteran member of Congress like Senator McCarthy, who now is a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, joins in the criticism, citizens are bound to pay attention.

The CIA does have its defenders. Perhaps the most effective job of illuminating and explaining the agency was done recently by Prof. Lyman Kirkpatrick of Brown University, who is a former executive director of the CIA. He says he was shocked, when he severed his ties with the agency, to find how much distrust and suspicion of the CIA exists among rank and file citizens, and how widespread is the feeling that it operates free of control, a power unto itself.

In his book, *The Real CIA*, and in a talk at Brown, he emphasized that much more control is exercised over the agency than most people imagine. Its director is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Its activities are reviewed by an advisory committee that reports to the President. It is subject to careful checking by the Bureau of the Budget. It must answer questions from three congressional subcommittees that are free to ask anything they want. It is constantly subject to the jealous rivalry of other intelligence agencies, in the Army, Navy, State Department and FBI.

However much supervision the CIA is given—and since it spends hundreds of millions of dollars, a lot of supervision is needed—the full story of its activities is never going to be given to the public. Thus, there is always going to be a residue of suspicion among laymen. Moreover, so long as the agency engages in clandestine operations, as well as simply in intelligence gathering, there's going to be an irreducible minimum of risk that it will be used in undemocratic ways, that it will interfere with foreign policy, that, in short, it will abuse its power. Mr. Kirkpatrick makes a good case, however, that the single agency is more valuable to the government than the fragmented activity that preceded it. As long as the United States is a great power, pitted against other great powers like Russia and China, the need for a CIA is going to continue.